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Health Passports Are Coming - What Does That Mean for Investment Migration?

Michael B. Krakat

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Is the common passport (health) coming? Global mobility is a pre-requisite for the sale and purchase of passports and without said mobility (including the new health-related mobility requirements), ordinary passports, no matter their number and quality, may well become frustrated.

Health-related mobility then seems no longer to be about countries per se, but to be about people. In other words, there is something more important than citizenship: Individual-global health-related factors of travel then go beyond countries and borders and, instead, pertain directly to real life. With focus on the person, borders are now flexible, moving with people, represented and reflected within each person.

We may now witness the beginning of a worldwide digital identity-system that could become linked to the health status of each and every individual.

Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Chile are among the countries that are now looking into so-called 'immunity passports' or 'COVID-free passports'.

Australian airline Qantas' boss Alan Joyce recently said about immunity-passports that "[I think that's going to be a common thing](#), talking to my colleagues in other airlines around the globe [...] What we're looking at is how you can have the [proof of] vaccination in an electronic version of a passport that certifies what the vaccine is and if it's acceptable the country you're traveling to. There's a lot of logistics, a lot of technology that needs to be put in place to make this happen."

Even absent any actual requirements to show vaccination or effective immunity, at the very least, mandatory testing seems to now emerge: In collaboration with The Commons Project, [the World Economic Forum is supporting the launch of 'CommonPass'](#), an initiative that aims

to enable safer airline and cross border travel by giving both travellers and governments confidence in each traveller's verified COVID-19 status, beyond short term solutions such as bans, quarantines or bubbles. Cathay Pacific Airways, United Airlines, Lufthansa, Virgin Atlantic, Swiss International Air Lines, and JetBlue are said to run trials of CommonPass. This initiative needs to be viewed before the IATA warning that global airlines faced combined losses of \$118.5bn this year and \$39bn next year. "We need to get borders safely reopened without quarantine so that people will fly again," said IATA's chief executive Alexandre de Juniac.

To use the digital health pass, that is, CommonPass, travellers take a [COVID-19 test at a certified lab](#) and upload the results to their mobile phone. They then complete any additional health screening questionnaires required by the destination country. With the complete test results and questionnaire, CommonPass confirms compliance, generating a QR Code, which can be scanned by airline staff as well as border officials.

Passports tied more to individuals than to states

It is difficult to foresee where this is going. Does this now effectively amount to a new form of passport or, at least, a mandatory new aspect attaching to all passports? Will CommonPass or other technologies act as de-facto or quasi-passports, with personalised health status complementing the values and other factors pertaining to actual passports?

Immunity passports containing health related data may now become a global requirement and pre-requisite for mobility and must, as such, be taken into consideration for global passport evaluations in addition to the visa-free travel rankings and in light of any one or more systems for digital health in place.

Digital health passes may at some stage effectively act as a pre-cursor or proto-version of global citizenship from the ground-up, attached to bodies not borders.

Integrated planning and communication between countries and the travel industry appear crucial to any of the above notions. Trust, clarity, consistency, and transparency are factors that will likely decide the fate of any form of new factual common passports. If, for instance, any major airline is not to implement these requirements, then the entire system may become compromised as there will be no consistency, jeopardising any generalized approach to this.

There is a history of standardised approaches to both citizenship, as well as to passports, be it the Nansen passport for stateless refugees as travel documents from 1922 to 1938, as first issued by the League of Nations, as well as [the contentious debate of what 'global citizenship' could actually mean](#). The Charter of the United Nations as well as the preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 recognise the '[i]nherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family'. These are today the minimum standards for the international arena, and may well function as some foundation for any emerging global citizenship, including health-related aspects of a citizenship globalizing.

While citizenship of the United Nations (or the earlier League of Nations) was at times thought about, absent any actual citizenship, focus is on travel as such and in isolation to any notions of membership. For example, the blue UN Laissez-Passer (UNLP), also known as a UN passport, is a travel document that accredits the identity and the affiliation of the individual

bearer to one of the UNLP-issuing United Nations organizations: United Nations, World Bank Group, International Monetary Fund, World Health Organization, etc.

Absent any actual, narrowly understood issuance of global citizenship (a current impossibility in that it would indeed require some form of global government/governance), however, common factors seem to already bind humanity, effectively creating some forms of global solidarity ('links'?) at least in addition to the solidarity felt within the nation-state. As a matter of fact, the world today appears to be irrevocably interconnected: This is through climate change, pollution, COVID-19, globalization, shared and joint responsibilities, cultures, as well as through the mercantilist sale of passports on the global market for membership entitlements (citizenship- or residence). The matter of standardisations and harmonisations of health requirements may then well be viewed to act as a de-facto element in an emerging form of a global take - not only on mobility but, eventually, also- on membership.

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